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Philip Hardie. *The Epic Successors of Virgil: A Study in the Dynamics of a Tradition.* 1993. Pp. xii + 129. ISBN 0-521-41542-X (hb, $44.95) / 42562-X (pb, $14.95).

Duncan F. Kennedy. *The Arts of Love: Five Studies in the Discourse of Roman Love Elegy.* 1993. Pp. xii + 107. ISBN 0-521-40422-3 (hb, $44.95) / 40767-2 (pb, $14.95).

Charles Martindale. *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception.* 1993. Pp. xvii + 117 + 4 plates. ISBN 0-521-41717-1 (hb, $44.95) / 42719-3 (pb, $14.95).

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Latinists were once among the first classicists to import innovative techniques of interpretation from other fields, primarily during the reign of the New Criticism, but have lately been notably more resistant to exoteric methods than have Hellenists, social historians, and various "Others". Not that structuralist, poststructuralist, feminist, gay, and new-historical readings of Latin literature are unavailable. The problem is rather that, while such theoretical positions may be said to have obtained a great deal of legitimacy and even leadership in fields such as Greek tragedy, the most influential Latinists of recent years, especially in this country, have maintained an essentially formalist outlook, persevering in traditional reading strategies and often becoming even more narrowly (and, in some cases, self-righteously) "philological" in character than their immediate predecessors. Am I alone in feeling that the field could use a bit of a jolt?

Evidently not, to judge by the three volumes under review. Series of this sort -- devoted to a particular subject and guided by a distinctive (not to mention youthful) editorial perspective -- are rare in our field, though common in others. This series is doubly unusual in acknowledging (to quote from the manifesto that appears opposite the title page of each book) "that the dominant modes of study of Roman literature are insufficiently in touch with current research in other areas of the classics and in the humanities at large." The series is intended to correct this situation by sponsoring "suggestive essays whose aim is to stimulate debate." A major part of this project has to do with a focus on literary-theoretical awareness. On the subject of theory per se, the individual authors range from pragmatically receptive (Hardie) to coolly and even passionately engaged (Kennedy and Martindale, respectively). All three are eclectic, none doctrinaire, and they share a predilection, in varying proportions, for theories of hermeneutics, readerly reception, historical contingency, and "the anxiety of influence."

Hardie's book will probably be most readily acceptable to traditionalists, but his approach to Silver epic is anything but business as usual. His subject is the set of

problems faced by any writer of epic after Vergil and the strategies these writers adopted to confront their chosen task. The result is not an exercise in change-ringing on generic topoi or retarded Alexandrianism, but a rethinking of what Silver epic is. For Hardie, it is an effort to deal with life after the end of history. After Vergil declared that Rome has reached its telos in the Augustan regime, what was left? Well, more history, for one thing, and, for Ovid, Lucan, Statius, Silius, and Valerius, a reconfiguration of Vergil's imperial discourse. This they accomplished not merely by observing the normal and established principles of *imitatio, aemulatio*, and so forth -- or, at least, Hardie does not attempt to illustrate their achievement in this way. Instead, he proceeds by analyzing themes and motifs -- e.g., "closure and continuation"; "the one and the many"; "one and two"; "sacrifice and substitution"; "the energy of hell"; "the dynastic principle" -- that may be said *argumenti causa* to originate in the *Aeneid* and then to recur in various ways and in new combinations throughout the work of Vergil's successors.

Certainly in this analysis tradition is not, to paraphrase Hardie, felt as a dead weight. Rather, as he puts it, "The successors to Vergil, at once respectful and rebellious, constructed a space for themselves through a 'creative imitation' that exploited the energies and tensions called up but not finally expended or resolved in the *Aeneid*" (p. xii). This reversal is perhaps too categorical, and does not in fact do full justice to Hardie's acute readings: there is more in Silver epic than unspent Vergilian dynamism, as he well shows. His analysis of Valerius' storm scene in *Arg.* 1 forced me to rethink completely an episode that I had long regarded as emblematic of the poet's deficiencies (and, by extension, those of Silver epic generally): a tendency , precisely, to enervate memorable Vergilian material that is a constant danger for the emulative poet. (There is more than a little Vergil worship in this position, I admit.) On Hardie's reading, the passage becomes not an act of defiling a classic text or a failure to measure up to an unsurpassable standard or to sustain the burden of a great tradition. Valerius' Neptune, unlike Vergil's, is untroubled by the occurrence of trespass in his domain (here by the Argonauts, in the *Aeneid* by the winds). His *laissez-faire* attitude is the antithesis of his Vergilian model's indignation at the chaos this transgression represents. On one reading, we might conclude that the need to innovate pressed on Valerius by the weight of tradition produced, through the standard technique of *oppositio*, an enervated Neptune and an episode drained of all dynamic potential. By contrast, Hardie brings out the duplicity of Valerius' Neptune and the way he "relishes the prospect of all the deaths by shipwreck to come" (p. 86). Divine machiavellianism finds its place in Vergil, of course; but Hardie's analysis looks less to Valerius' imitation of individual Vergilian characters than to the dismantling in Silver epic of the pronounced dualism between heaven and hell that informs the Aeneid from start to finish. This was a project begun by Vergil himself; but as the principate progressed, the urge to read Vergil as the unwitting prophet of a principate and an empire shot through with deep moral contradictions must have become irresistible. And it is in this urge, as much as in the originary energy of the *Aeneid* itself, that we must look for the forces that drove Vergil's successors.

Hardie's theoretical influences are diverse. He uses the structuralists well, and cites critics like Girard and Greenblatt for particular lines of argument. But in his final chapter he confronts Harold Bloom's Freudian model of poetic genesis, arguing cogently for its special applicability to the characteristics of classical, especially Latin, epic. Despite the position of honor that Bloom occupies in Hardie's argument, it is not clear that Hardie is willing to buy into this or any other theory in its entirety. But the way in which he uses the available theoretical models is instructive. Principally, I suppose, it illustrates the fact that what looks like a straightforward, commonsensical piece of practical criticism can easily be shown to be implicated in a number of

sophisticated theoretical discourses. This is a rather more palatable version of the by now tiresome old saw, "you have a theory whether you know it or not." Here the point is more that many of us are doing theory in a vacuum, cut off from the more explicit and informative theoretical discourse taking place in other fields -- and as a result, perhaps, continually reinventing the wheel. Hardie's example shows many of the connections that already exist between the philological "mainstream" and the theoretical "lunatic fringe."

Kennedy takes the palm for one key achievement: his book is the best of the three for saying valuable and insightful things about a specific body of poetry while simultaneously engaging in an informed and acutely self-aware theoretical argument. It is now also (in my humble opinion) the best single book available on Latin love elegy. This statement needs some further qualification in that Kennedy does not deal with Latin love elegy in its entirety (that was not his aim); thus the beginner might come a way unsure what constitutes this particular genre (a condition I have learned to live with over the years), and the specialist will find little enlightenment about narrative elegy, aetiological elegy, the elegiac epistle, and other varieties as such; but on the most characteristic concerns of those poems most central to the genre -- the Cynthia, Delia, and Nemesis cycles; Ovid's *Amores* and erotodidactic works -- the book is superb.

The book's overriding theme is the nature of elegy as discourse, rather than as *imitatio vitae.* It begins by contrasting two readings of elegy as mimesis, one by Jasper Griffin and one by Maria Wyke, in order to examine their respective views on how elegy, as a referential system grounded in language, relates to some external reality -- for Griffin, "the raw stuff of real life," for Wyke "signifiers of moral and political ideologies" that displace or occlude "the realities of women's lives." The trajectory of the discussion leads the reader to anticipate a choice against Griffin's "overtly male, overtly privileged" (pp. 4-5) reading in favor of Wyke's observation that "realism itself is a quality of the text, not a direct manifestation of the 'real' world" (p. 5). Instead, Kennedy moves unexpectedly to a more radically decentered view of the text, and of elegy in particular, as non-referential, or, rather, incapable of final explanation by reference to any external objectivity. Both Griffin and Wyke, argues Kennedy, invoke, respectively, "reality" and "ideology" as closural devices to advance their own project(s) of making sense of elegy: "Every discursive intervention sort with greater or lesser success, figured in the (illusion of) fulfilment of the desire which informs the intervention" (p. 9). What we do is neither to read through elegy to reality, nor to read it more or less accurately in terms of reality, but rather to construct readings of, or "tell stories" about, elegy -- an activity that forces us to adopt, consciously or unconsciously, the parameters of discourse, including the desire for some goal of analysis that will signal arrival at a destination and thereby validate our inquiry. But, once arrived, we may realize, or someone may point out to us, that our discourse is analyzable by the same terms, or ones very similar to those that we have brought to bear on elegy. And so on.

This much of Kennedy's argument is not original or new, although his development of these basic points is fresh, lucid, and even entertaining. In what follows, it becomes obvious both that these insights cast a special illumination on elegy, which is after all in many ways a non-genre engaged constantly in the process of writing and unwriting itself. Later chapters carry the opening discussion of "Representation and the Rhetoric of Reality" (a kind of three R's for the 90's) into an examination of various essentialisms and conventional points of (supposedly) fixed reference in the critique of elegy. The concepts of *amor*, gender and sexuality, and Augustanism are first analyzed as discursive tropes, then as figures for one another, constantly swapping "literal" and "metaphorical" roles, in a discussion partly indebted to Derrida. The ensuing treatment

of the lexicon of sex and that of elegiac composition, particularly in Ovid, as differing versions of the same thing is laden with wordplay of the very type it seeks to illustrate and constitutes for me the, yes, climax of the entire book. Chapter 4, "A Lover's Discourse" (Barthes), I found comparatively inert; but the excellent chapter 5, "An Irregular in Love's Army: Problems of Identification," returns to the issue of external reference by examining the issue of Cynthia's (and Delia's and Lesbia's ...) "real identity" and concludes with a compelling critique of Paul Veyne's anti-historicist, radically textualist reading of elegy. In place of Veyne's rigorously dualistic "sociological" *or* "semiological" reading of elegy, Kennedy argues convincingly for an interpretive practice open both to the unstable nature of referentiality in elegiac discourse *and* to the pervasive belief of people like Apuleius and many modern critics that behind the "written women" of elegy stand "real women." It is not enough to recognize that literature is not reality: "'difference' can be asserted only if 'similarity' is also asserted at some level, however occluded, and *vice versa*" (p. 98).

What is most impressive throughout this book cannot be conveyed by any brief summary. In a practical sense, Kennedy reads elegy extremely well; his insights into particular passages and into the discourse of elegy as a whole are illuminating and important. But the book is informed with a theoretical sophistication that goes well beyond borrowing a technique from Derrida or situating an argument vis-à-vis Foucault. There is here a level of critical self-awareness that is highly unusual in classics, where we like to think of our methods as the "appropriate" or even "natural" ones, ideally allowing our texts "to speak for themselves." Perhaps the greatest value in this book lies in its ability to show us some of the advantages of a heightened critical *eironeia* and to set us on a path toward developing such a stance and making it part of our discipline.

Martindale's book is perhaps the most disturbing of the three, no doubt intentionally so. Where Hardie has succeeded in reconfiguring debate within largely centrist theoretical terms, and Kennedy writes with the cheerful and relaxed aplomb of one who has peeked over the brink of literary and ontological nihilism and has thoroughly enjoyed the view, Martindale adopts a tone that verges at times on the vatic, and in general bespeaks the fervid commitment of a determined reformer. The book is full of epigraphs, among which the works of T. S. Eliot and Lewis Carroll are especially well represented. The four chapters describe themselves in musical terms as "suite", "divertimento", and so forth, representing, I suppose, an allusion to Eliot's *Four Quartets*. There are repeated catch phrases: things are continually being said to be "always and never" or "always already" one way or another. There are also passages that appear to resonate with a personal meaning for the author, but one that is not obvious to the reader. I may as well also mention the puzzling graphic devices found at the ends of chapter 1 and the postscript, so that the reader of this review cannot say I didn't warn her.[1]

Though it may not sound that way, I actually enjoyed most of these touches ("always and never", I admit, wore a bit thin). Some they will cause to climb the walls, or not to finish the book. But enjoyment and disapproval are really beside the point. These deliberate quirks and personalisms remind the reader of Martindale's main theme: that all readings of all texts are historically contingent, i.e., are inevitably conditioned by the spatial, temporal, linguistic, social, and religious horizons of the person doing the reading. His project is thus closely related to Kennedy's: both of them thematize the text's tendency to show the reader what s/he wants to see. But whereas Kennedy basically elides the gulf of time separating us from antiquity, the gulf across which we confront ancient texts, Martindale insists on the importance of that time as constituting an interpretive continuum from which we cannot escape. One aspect of what this means

is that premodern readings of ancient literature *are simply not available to us* -- that the notion of a reading of (say) the *Aeneid* based on a philological reconstruction of the conditions of reception that first greeted the poem is not only chimerical, but is in fact itself a modern idea, one that, unrecognized as such, can only be an exercise in critical self-delusion. By way of illustration, Martindale draws on the current debate over "early music" and "authentic" performance practice. We cannot recover a historically "authentic" reading of Vergil any more than we can an "authentic" performance of a Bach concerto; nor (to continue Martindale's analogy) can anyone pretend to conduct Bach in a way untouched by traditional, "inauthentic" performance practice. Thus the Hogwoods and Norringtons of the world are in a fundamental sense epigoni of Furtwängler and Klemperer (p. 17). This means that we, as readers of Vergil, are in important ways necessarily (and whether we realize it or not) also readers of Lucan and Dante in their capacity as readers of Vergil.

Vergil and Ovid, and the history of their reception and interpretation, are Martindale's chief sources of illustrative exempla. But despite such elements of consistency, "the structure of the book," as the author admits, "is more cumulative than sequential" (p. xiv). What we get is thus more a group of semi-independent analyses occurring in unevenly distributed clusters, rather than the linear arguments of Hardie and Kennedy. Individual analyses themselves are often partial, conclusions stated somewhat obliquely. Some of the book's best moments include its critiques of other critics, such as its historically situated reading of Adam Parry's New Critical classic, "The Two Voices of Virgil's *Aeneid*" (entitled "Breaking the Well-Wrought Urn," pp. 40-43); a number of passages in its analysis of "translation" as a model for all interpretation (chapter 4, pp. 75-100), which moves with assurance from Milton to Borges; and its continuing effort to soften or even eliminate the distinction between artist and critic (pp. 35-39, 53-54, and chapter 2 generally, with an incisive discussion again, but from a different perspective, of Bloom). But beyond these individual strengths, the book is suggestive in ways that elude easy articulation. One realizes that Martindale has grappled with some of the central theoretical issues involved in doing classics in a way that few of us have. Our own sense of belatedness and alienation from texts written so very long ago in languages that can never be fully our own; our compromising complicity in the "Battle of the Books," a battle long since over, but one that leaves classicists with awkward ties to both the victorious and the vanquished camps; a certain religious attachment, both to our material and to the methods by which we study it (one of the most pervasive and least clearly articulated aspects of this book); these are some of the guilty secrets of our profession with which Martindale seems to be wrestling -- or, to be frank, with which I have found myself wrestling since reading Martindale. Not all of us enjoy thinking about such things, and those who don't will probably dislike this book. But turning away from such matters -- what Martindale calls "The widespread refusal to take metaphysical questions seriously" -- produces, undeniably, I think, "much bad (and occluded) metaphysics, in literary analysis as well as elsewhere" (p. xiii). Martindale does not, finally, give us what we need; but that is impossible. What he does do is make a case -- one that is undeniably personal and even idiosyncratic, but ultimately persuasive -- that the failure of Latinists, at any rate, to develop the habit of thinking about what they do for a living at a level at least slightly above the utterly mundane, is in large measure responsible for that is wrong with our profession, and that the development of such habits is an absolute prerequisite to its future health.

The books, and the series that they currently constitute, share certain strengths and weaknesses. The series format is, in my view, a great strength. All three books are just over 100 pages, a length that, combined with the accessible styles that all three authors employ, makes them a not very late evening's worth of reading apiece. The relatively

light annotation (an editorial parameter? see Hardie p. xii) also abets rapid absorption; I would like to see future contributors go farther in this regard. These books are less interesting for their connections to existing scholarship than for the extremely fresh and provocative things that the authors themselves have to say. But classicists are weaned on footnotes, not on speculative philosophy, and the habit of developing and presenting one's ideas in all their naked splendor (or otherwise!) does not come easy to us. In these books, the citations point to existing work by other Latinists on the poems in question, as well as to the theoretical models being borrowed from without, and to previous applications of them within the field of classics, chiefly by Hellenists. I take this to be part scholarly responsibility, part evidence of the entire field's theoretical immaturity. To exploit the insights of Gadamer, Bloom, et al., and to engage in dialogue with them is an important and heretofore largely neglected step. But the next step should be to generate new theoretical models to address issues raised more clearly by ancient Latin texts, but of general relevance to the study of literature as a whole. If future volumes of this series can manage to look beyond the admittedly virtuous goal of getting Latinists hip, to the more ambitious one of making Latin studies an integral part of critical discourse, they will have performed a service of profound value.

There are prosopographical matters as well. The authors dealt with in these volumes are all poets, all integral members of "the canon". (I may be stretching a point here as regards, say, Silius and Valerius; but they represent, as Hardie shows, a definitively canonical tradition, and are not to be confused with, say, Valerius Maximus or Dictys Cretensis.) The canon is of course a classical invention, and ought in our field to be more an object of investigation than it is (Martindale has some insightful remarks on this point in his critique of Gadamer's appeal to the canon, pp. 23-29). This means that we need to look a bit further outside our graduate reading lists and ask questions about how, in history (Martindale again), such lists came to be. Certainly critics like Tony Woodman and others have done a lot to show that "lit crit" is not something applicable only to texts in verse, and it would be useful if at least some future volumes in this series reflected that fact. And, one wonders, does the series title "Roman Literature and its Contexts" mean to include historical subjects? Technical subjects (i.e. the transmission and editing of texts, epigraphy, ancient scholarship, etc.)? This isn't made clear. The authors of the volumes themselves show a certain homogeneity as well: all (I believe) English, all male, all with some predilection for theoretical positions founded on a view of poetic traditions that can be related, all too easily, to the model of paternity and filiation. There are important counter-observations here. To launch a series, editors almost have to rely on personal connections, and both these editors are fairly recent immigrants who were trained in England -- where, after all, the press itself is based. It is perhaps also the case that the philology/criticism polarity is less a problem in England than here, and that it may be difficult to find American Latinists who would (for whatever reason) feel comfortable writing a book like these. If this is the case, let's hope things will change. The gender issue is implicated in this dichotomy. There is no doubt that women (among American Latinists, that is) have been more interested in critical and theoretical issues than men, who have tended to defend the bastions of philology (there are exceptions, on both sides). Kennedy's book, of course, is as sensitive to gender issues as is elegy itself; and he is frank and forthright in acknowledging the importance of feminist theory to his own readings of elegy. So, knee-jerk criticism should be a voided on all three counts. But, by the same token, I hope the series will not fall into the trap of becoming an androcentric, anglophile, crypto-traditionalist arbiter of what and who is and are acceptable theories and interpreters thereof for the wider world of Latin studies. I don't anticipate that this will happen; but I am absolutely certain that somebody will look at it in that way. For this, if for no other reason, I hope the series will not remain a novelty. Competition might not be a bad idea.

I don't suppose that all readers will be as enthusiastic about each of these books as I am. I suspect that all three gained in various ways from being devoured together in fairly rapid succession. They are highly readable, provocative, and refreshing. I came away from the last looking forward to the next, and more than a little encouraged about the prospect of seeing Latin studies enter the twentieth century before it's over. I expect that most readers will find in these books reason to welcome the new series, and to wish it continued success.

NOTES

- [1] Use of the feminine pronoun with a referent of unknown gender is another of Martindale's favorite stylistic devices.